

Developing waterways for sustainable transport in the North East: Stakeholders call for ensuring adequate draft, augmenting terminal and warehousing facilities

IWAI holds Road Show in Guwahati

The Inland Waterways Authority of India organized a road show in association with the Ministry Of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) in Guwahati last week to brainstorm on the major issues linked with developing the rivers of the North East as viable and sustainable means for cargo and passenger transportation.

The seminar showcased the potential for cargo and passenger transportation on rivers Brahmaputra- NW- 2, Barak- NW- 16 and others. It also highlighted the enabling policies and infrastructure facilities available for safe handling and transportation of cargo on the navigable stretches where development works have commenced.

Senior officials of the Govt. of Assam, Govt. of Meghalaya, Govt. of Tripura, Indian Army, Central Rail side Warehousing Company Ltd, Power Grid Corporation of India, Indian Oil, Hindustan Petroleum, Coal India, a delegation from Bhutan and various logistics firms and vessel operators attended the event.

Stakeholders pointed out to the non availability of adequate draft between Sirajganj- Daikhowa & Zakiganj- Ashuganj on the Indo Bangladesh Protocol (IBP) route, the need for night navigation facilities, more Ro- Ro facilities and Jetties on NW- 2 and IBP route. The need for an Inland Waterways Terminal between Dibrugarh and Bogibil, more loading - unloading facilities and warehousing facilities on IWT routes in the North East were also discussed. The need for training facilities for manpower engaged in the IWT sector was also pointed out. IWAI Chairperson Smt. Nutan Guha Biswas assured that concerted steps would be taken to enable smooth navigation on rivers in the North East and IBP route.

Of the 106 new National Waterways that were notified in April 2016 under the National Waterways Act, 2016, 19 are in the North East. These include NW- 16 (river Barak), NW- 95 (river Subansiri), NW- 39 (river Ganol), NW- 93 (river Simsang), NW- 101 (river Tizu and Zungki), NW- 31 (Dhansiri), NW- 62 (river Lohit), NW- 106 (river Umngot), NW- 18 (river Beki), among others.

River Brahmaputra connects the North East with Kolkata through the Indo-Bangladesh Protocol (IBP) route. The IBP route offers a seamless connectivity between NW- 1 (Allahabad – Haldia) and ports in Bangladesh via NW- 2 (Pandu, Assam). Along with river Brahmaputra, river Barak too provides inland water transit between India and Bangladesh through Pandu, Karimganj and Silghat (Assam) and Bangladesh's Narayanganj, Khulna, Mongla, Sirajganj and Ashuganj

The Government of India is making constant endeavours to promote waterways as a more cost effective, economically viable and environment friendly mode of transport in the country. In this context, a lot of work has already been carried out to develop IWT in the North East Region. The NW- 2 stretch has been augmented with several infrastructural facilities such as a multimodal port and ship repair facility at Pandu, Ro- Ro terminal at Dhubri, Ro- Ro ferry services, night navigation facilities, Differential Global Positioning System (DGPS) Stations and River Information Station (RIS) etc. to facilitate safe transportation of goods and passengers (tourists).
